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THE MYTH OF "UNDEMOCRATIC GERMANY"

by Gerda Richards Crosby

Since its establishment in May, 1949, the new West German Federal Government has functioned well and Chancellor Adenauer has steered a stable course through parliamentary shoals which might have shaken many a cabinet in other countries. And, as a sort of certificate of democratic self-government, Bonn has now become a member of the Council of Europe, the organization of Western European representative governments.

In view of all this, we might well subject to critical examination the assumption that a fundamental divergence in institutions and theory has persisted between ourselves and Germany, common heritors of the culture of our Western world. No notion has become more commonly accepted in this country and England than that, while we have fostered the faith and achieved the fact of liberal democracy, the Germans have either held aloof from its tenets and institutions or opposed them. Use of this doctrine as a high-powered propaganda weapon prepared men's minds for acquiescence in the Versailles Treaty and its aftermath; led to misunderstanding of the import of the Hitler ascendancy; and during the recent war facilitated the influence of the Morgenthau Plan and the acceptance of all that has followed. Otherwise it is hard to see how the American public would so submissively have travelled the Potsdam road. On that highway the doctrine marked the first milestone.

The needs of Allied World War I propaganda brought to climax the development of this dogma which, as a matter of fact, had been already foreshadowed. In England it found a fertile soil in the "Whig history", the English version of Nineteenth Century nationalistic historical writing which attributed to England the genesis, long gestation, and fulfillment of modern liberalism. The idea that England's enemies rejected this evolution followed readily, and willing hands meanwhile adapted the doctrine to American needs.

II

Although often forgotten, it is undeniable that German currents fed the main stream of Western democratic thought, and that Germany, like England, has an ancient tradition of self-government. To the history of the culmination of this long development in Nineteenth Century liberalism, such names as Kant, Humboldt, and Stein are vital. Nevertheless,

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there has persisted what Ruggiero termed "the widespread but superficial view" that Germany has stood aloof from that movement.

Liberal democratic theory made two essential institutional demands; first a constitutional framework for the protection of individual rights; and second a political setup aimed to enforce the popular will. Germans placed greater emphasis on the first. Their liberal thought centered around the idea of the Rechtsstaat, the constitutional State, based on law, so contrived as to secure individual rights through an almost automatically adjusting legal framework. Around the second, Americans developed a mythology. German publicists and statesmen habitually discussed it realistically. While accepting the justice and utility of ultimate popular control, they rejected the equalitarian conception that parliamentary responsibility and universal suffrage necessarily achieve this. Further, they considered that views of the monarch and officials on the objective interest of the State have representative value. Curiously, the notion of "representative bureaucracy" now receives attention from our own political scientists.

In practice Germany introduced very early the primary means by which popular political control is implemented. In 1867 the new North German Confederation under Bismarck's lead adopted universal manhood suffrage for elections to the Reichstag. Property qualifications had ended in many American states only a few decades earlier. In 1867 England eased them from the middle-class franchise of the 1832 Reform, and abolished them for Parliamentary elections in 1918.

III

Unless a nation with a wide suffrage is to degenerate into a mass manipulated by propaganda techniques or by worse measures, some means both of co-ordination and guidance must operate. Let us look at this controlling process in the years before 1914. In England, a tightly articulated, political, social, economic and educational system kept power in the hands of the governing class. The Cabinet and party system enforced conformance on the individual member of Parliament. In America, the complexity and division of our Presidential and Federal system moderated mass action. The impact of concentrated economic power was felt throughout our institutions. Purely predatory groups for long periods monopolized the governments of great cities. Large sections of the population, though not excluded in legal theory, in fact were permitted no part in political life. Mainly, it was the party leaders who co-ordinated and reconciled pressing regional, economic, and social interests, setting up two alternative patterns of personnel and

policy. In both England and the United States, then, controls operated outside the legal framework of the constitutional system.

In Germany, in accordance with the legalistic and judicial focus of German liberalism, they were provided for within the legal framework. The professional government officials performed much of the work of co-ordination of competing interests from which programs emerged. The popularly elected Reichstag might and did criticize, change, reject and provide substitutes for these programs. And this was true even though the Chancellor need not resign on occasional adverse votes.

To Englishmen, it was the lack of the Chancellor's parliamentary responsibility in the English sense which seemed to prove Germany "undemocratic". To Americans it was the persistence of the hereditary monarchical principle as a force. Both English and Americans contrasted these legal controls with their absence in their own constitutions and disregarded, in their democratic theorizing, the limitations which the actual operation of their own systems was setting upon popular power.

Turning from political procedures to social programs we find that Germany by adopting in the Eighties compulsory sickness, accident and old age insurance led the United States by half a century and Britain by several decades in implementing "freedom from want". The acceptance of State control and of the equalitarianism implied may be named "democratic" or considered a departure from that doctrine. But groups who most loudly proclaim Germany chronically "undemocratic" regard "social security" progress the ultimate test of democratic achievement.

In rapid shift of class and condition, young, expansive America contrasted with all the old cultures of Europe. In England, the governing class exacted social servitude with a smoothness and sophistication wanting in Germany. Fluidity of social atmosphere depends on complex factors. It will not be effectuated in Germany or elsewhere by conviction of its desirability or by particular political setups.

Credits on the German side of the democratic ledger and debits on our own were ignored by British and Americans alike when they forged propaganda weapons after 1914. The resulting slogan's usefulness in sustaining war effort and preparing the way for Versailles was but the beginning of its performance.

IV

After her defeat, Germany, by the adoption of a constitution with proportional representation, woman suffrage and the initiative and referendum, became in her political procedures "the most democratic democracy of the world". No other great State had attempted to operate on

such a basis. In the face of tremendous difficulties, the achievement of the Republic during its 14 years was substantial. When it fell victim to Hitler it was easy for British and Americans, under the spell of the old slogan, to repeat parrot-like that Germans had always been incapable of democracy anyway. But so facile an explanation obscured the import of Hitlerism. The elements in the movement symptomatic of our whole time were ignored. That totalitarianism is a disease of an epoch, not of a region, was not grasped. Nor was notice taken of the part that influences outside Germany played in making possible Hitler's rise and the consolidation of his power. Yet nothing was more needed than a crystal clear understanding of these things.

This misapprehension was but the prelude to the role (in a new war) of the old slogan of a chronically and perversely "undemocratic" Germany. It swayed officials in policy formulation, and helped make their policies acceptable to our people. It served as a predisposing condition for the failure to give heed to the German resistance movement. Aided among many other factors by a sensationalized picture of German rearmament under the Republic, and a confusion of mind about the distinction between that and the Hitler rearmament, it smoothed the way for America's "flight from reason" -- the doctrine of Unconditional Surrender, the Morgenthau Plan, through Potsdam, directive JCS 1067 and other occupation policies, down to the factory dismantlings.

The whole course here sketched forms part of "la trahison des clercs". For not only have intellectuals been among the earliest and most vigorous indoctrinators of this and other slogans, but once it has become fashionable to accept them, few voices have been lifted to correct the fallacies, or point the way of moderation. It is disheartening that America, aloof as she has been from the old wrongs and suspicions which have made the reasonable conduct of affairs in Europe so difficult, has not played a more creditable role. After she has adopted one set of nationalistic superstitions for her own she has often outdone all in the hysteria of her insistence on them. Only a habit of "harder headedness" can equip Americans for understanding the potential problems of the new German State and the general peril of today's world.

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By Frank C. Hanighen

February 7, 1951

THAT EISENHOWER REPORT: What the General said to Congress and the American people -- so runs an oft-repeated refrain these last few days -- is a "warning to Stalin that we mean business". So far we have heard no sounds of quaking from the direction of the Kremlin, so we assume the imprecation remains unheeded. Actually, behind the applause on Capitol Hill, there have lingered many suspicions which will hardly serve to help create the unity invoked by the General. After members of the legislative branch had studied his suave phrases on paper, certain doubts arose.

How did the General on a hasty flying visit contrive to find signs of "rejuvenation" of spirit in Europeans, not hitherto visible to the bulk of trained newspaper observers abroad? That part of the speech sounded like obvious whistling to bolster American spirit. Next, "the primary need" said Eisenhower, is arms, not men. If that be so, what has all the shouting been about these past two months -- the Great Debate, the issue of Congressional approval for troops, the dispute of air-navy strategy vs. mass ground warfare, etc.? Also, sotto voce behind closed doors of the Committee, the General reportedly asked for just a few divisions. Naturally, this revived bitter memories of Churchill's famous demand, "Give us the tools, and we will do the job." A member of Congress does not need to be incorrigibly suspicious if he wonders who is going to pay for this "primary need". If Western Europe is so reluctant about voting funds for large armies, will they not be equally backward about appropriations for weapons? It is obvious who will pick up the check.

Indeed, not a few Republicans and conservative Democrats perceive, after study of the speech, the following emerging pattern of Fair Deal appeasement -- somewhat similar to that prevailing several years ago: Germany is written off as an ally -- hence, no political liability in New York; the General bypasses Madrid -- therefore no allegiance with Spain to offend the trade-union leaders; finally the prospect of a big American-supported boondoggle, called "arming Europe", staffed by the same old ECA bureaucracy. (The ECA bureaucrats have been working hard for this, to save their jobs.) These stigmata on the body of Eisenhower's plan provoke grave reflection. Those Republicans and Southern Democrats who have hailed Eisenhower as their Savior in 1952 now have reason to reconsider. Already Administration circles talk of Eisenhower as their next presidential candidate.

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A DEAL WITH STALIN? One aspect of the General's public addresses has not entirely escaped attention -- the fact that nowhere did he refer to Soviet Russia. The menace, in his words, was "Communism". This amounted almost to a verbal feat, and could hardly have been accidental. Diplomatic circles here have riveted their attention on this omission. Does the General still entertain visions of a "fixup" with Marshal Zhukov, as once attributed to him? Or was this extraordinary phraseology utilized by White House speech-writers (who certainly must have had their hand in its composition), as a groundwork for later appeasement contact between Truman and "old Joe"? It is also remarked that the General emphasized the need of better U.S. "information" services in Europe. But that does not necessarily mean "psychological warfare". Where is all this heading? Few members of Congress noticed these things, for the reason that the Eisenhower speech was -- publicity-wise -- struck amidship by the wave of opinion over the railroad strike.

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OUR SECURITY: Some members of Congress, despite the General's soothing words, wonder whether his plan for rearmament will actually deter Stalin. The prime objective is to prevent war. It could be that to jettison Germany as an ally (the Fair-Dealers assume this is what Eisenhower meant) may be necessary to prevent Russia from moving westward again this year. But is the Eisenhower idea the best way? What do we have now which will frighten, will deter Stalin? These members say that all we have to carry the atom bomb from the U.S. to Russia is two groups of B-36's, or sixty planes capable of performing such a mission; also that, there are only some rather sparing orders for more; but lots of tactical aircraft are on order to support a mass army. One air force officer reportedly says: for the same money spent on 10 divisions for Europe, we could have 15 groups of 450 B-36's. Compare that to the little dabs of foot soldiers on the Western rim of Europe. Is this sound? It hardly spells, as some rashly say, that the balance of world power has decisively shifted to the U.S. We are in the same mess as before.

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ARMS AND MEN: What is behind the Nevada explosions, according to the opinion of well-informed observers in the Capitol, is exactly -- psychological warfare. If these were tests of the H-bomb, or of some other revolutionary developments, then the public will have been treated to no such publicity.

---- There seems to be no chance of getting an unbiased, and non-political opinion on our defense needs from the generals, as Miss Lonigan hopefully suggested in her piece ("Wanted a Policy for Military Survival", January 17). For a real "Iron Curtain" order has been issued by the Defense Department which says in effect that officers may speak freely provided that what they say is in accordance with State and Defense policies. The irony is delicious. But as it works out in practice it amounts to a clamp-down on any independent opinions, offered to civilians or to members of Congress: indeed no opinions at all save those sanctioned by Mr. Acheson and the Army clique now ruling defense strategy. Marshall, Bradley and Collins (to whom may be added, Eisenhower) -- all ground force men, thoroughly convinced of the ground-force concepts, now dictate what other military figures must say. And that is designed to stifle any expressions of dissent from General Vandenberg, head of the Air Force, or from Admiral Sherman, head of the Navy, who is regarded as one of the ablest minds in the whole defense setup.

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ACHESON: In the past few weeks, there has sprung up a new kind of opposition to the Secretary of State -- but from quite a different quarter than formerly. And this breeze -- noted by only the more acute observers -- leads to more serious consideration of the intermittent reports of his resignation.

For many months, the Right has thundered for his removal. Then the Center joined this chorus, with state legislatures passing resolutions and even the more indulgent middle-of-the-roaders allowing that he might as well go, since the unpopularity has unfortunately rendered him useless as a Secretary of State. Finally, voices from the Left indicate disapproval of a man whom they formerly defended with great vigor. Mr. James Reston of the New York Times rather mercilessly showed that Acheson has by this time completely reversed his attitude of a year ago towards the Far East -- even to the extent of showing less ill-will towards the Chiang Kai-shek regime. Then Doris Fleeson, a columnist usually reflecting the sentiments of the Left-wing clique in the Fair Deal, gave vent to doubts about his actions. The last column (Washington Star, January 31) we have inspected of this important writer has some more-in-sorrow-than-in-anger observations that could not be overlooked. She speaks of how "the Medusa of McCarthyism has petrified Secretary of State Acheson so that he can neither fight effectively for his policies nor foil their critics", and more in similar vein.

Evidently, when your Secretary of State starts flirting with the Chinese Nationalists, and presses the UN into labelling the Communist regime an "aggressor", a solemn warning is issued. Since it is delivered by the Left camarillas in the regime, the threat to Mr. Acheson's continuance in office is really becoming serious.

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BIG GOVERNMENT GROWING BIGGER: Under adroit moves by key figures in Truman's political machine, all of the unusual and exceptional powers and vital functions, granted in the emergency mobilization acts by Congress, may well be placed under regular departments of the Government. Concentration would be primarily under the Departments of Justice and Labor, and later, of Commerce. It is now but a slow transformation, yet it could prove to be a sweeping reorganization in government, with peacetime departments taking on special powers of a virtually totalitarian character.

The matter comes to a focus in the seizure of price-control powers by Attorney General McGrath, and in the success of Secretary of Labor Tobin in splitting apart the dual and joint controls over wages and prices imposed by Congress. McGrath's flank move in grasping enforcement took place in naming Herbert Bergson as General Counsel to Defense Mobilizer Wilson. Bergson has been chief of the Anti-Trust division, but retired recently to enter private practice. Then, suddenly, his new law firm announced he was "on leave" to Wilson. Next Deputy Attorney General Peyton Ford moved to vest all price control enforcement in his department, and Bergson is asserted to have agreed with him to take such controls from DiSalle's agency. Other seasoned bureaucrats are being pushed into key spots in the emergency agencies, and thus in a position to work hand-in-glove with the permanent departments.

With "special units" for administration and enforcement set up in the regular departments, Big Government takes on an Atlas aspect it has not had before, and becomes indeed great and powerful.

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GIMMICKS AND GADGETS IN PRICE CONTROLS: Bureaucratic encroachment at the Cabinet level (as described above) is threatening the official life of Price Administrator DiSalle. In much the same manner that Secretary of Labor Tobin reached to take over wage controls from Stabilization Chief Cyrus Ching, Attorney General McGrath is moving to take a vital part in price controls. DiSalle and his aids are gasping; the ingenious move by Truman "regulars" has put them in doubt whether even a rug will be left on the floor of their offices. DiSalle has appealed to Economic Stabilizer Johnston to help in saving his agency from emasculation. Defense Mobilizer Wilson may be in a seriously compromised position. All of them suspect there's been skillful knifing, and adroit use of hatchets at the top level, and they are facing a new form of jungle warfare.

McGrath's move, like Tobin's, was made quietly, and seemed harmless on its face, until DiSalle found McGrath setting up a "special unit" to prosecute price control violators, and taking over all enforcement. Aghast with foreboding, DiSalle and Johnston hurriedly looked at the law. What they found was that they had been sitting on a time bomb without knowing it. During passage in Congress someone had inserted the following weird little "gadget": "All litigation arising under this act or the regulations promulgated thereunder shall be under the supervision and control of the Attorney General." Members of Congress say they did not note the "gimmick" in passing the bill. They admit a lot of it was written in the Department of Justice, and, also, that this is the most unusual provision that has ever been put in such a law. Under this provision, McGrath, rather than DiSalle, Johnston or Wilson, is in reality Price Administrator. Today a compromise is in the making, but even so, under McGrath's interpretation, DiSalle can move enforcement only through McGrath.

Book Events

Tito and Goliath by Hamilton Fish Armstrong. New York: The Macmillan Co. \$3.50.
Reviewed by Constantin Fotitch.

Few Americans are more familiar with the intricacies of Balkan politics and the complexities of the problems of Central Europe and the countries behind the Iron Curtain than the author of this book. Mr. Hamilton Fish Armstrong has enjoyed personal acquaintance with most of the political leaders and possesses an intimate knowledge of those countries acquired through frequent visits over many years. Yugoslavia, where he had his first public assignment as Assistant Military Attache in World War I, was his favorite ground of exploration. During his almost yearly visits to the country of the Southern Slavs he developed a close friendship with the late King Alexander and many of its leading statesmen. His book is based on unique personal experience and enriched with an extensive and detailed documentation.

Tito and Goliath would have been a textbook on Soviet policy in Europe and on the dictatorial regimes of the so-called People's Democracies, had Mr. Armstrong not been under the spell of Tito and his spokesmen. The latter, it should not be forgotten, have set the pattern for these police States, and continue their brutal methods of dictatorship in spite of their struggle with the Cominform. The author has been overly impressed by their interpretation of the ideological nature of this spectacular conflict.

For instance, he seems to swallow whole their pretenses that already during World War II, Tito resisted Soviet policy (aimed at making the new Communist States entirely subservient to the Kremlin) because he and his Communist Party always placed their loyalty to Yugoslavia above the loyalty to the Soviets. Mr. Armstrong, convinced that this is the basic reason for the present conflict, ignores a particularly important piece of evidence to the contrary. This was the request made by Eduard Kardelj, No. 2 man of the regime, in the name of Tito's Government, to the Soviet Ambassador on June 5, 1945, that "the Soviets should not consider them (the Tito officials) as representatives of another country but as representatives of one of the future Soviet Republics and the Yugoslav Communist Party as a part of the All-Union Communist Party". This statement casts strong doubt on Tito's pretention that he is now fighting for the defense of the independence of Yugoslavia.

Mr. Armstrong has been led to believe that Tito's revolt has gained him the support of the masses although actually they remain overwhelmingly anti-Communist.

He also thinks that Tito's revolt against the Soviets has endangered the satellite regimes, and weakened the Communist position in Western European countries. However, so far the only effect of Titoism on the satellites has been the liquidation of unreliable elements and firmer grip of the Soviets over these puppet regimes. And in Western Europe, the phenomenon of Titoism has had very little effect. Even in Trieste, on the doorstep of Yugoslavia and with a considerable Slovene minority, where free elections were conducted on June 12, 1949 (one year after Tito's split with the Cominform), Tito's followers, in spite of their intense propaganda, polled only 3.65 per cent while the Cominform Communists won 24 per cent.

Tito's revolt has had a nuisance value for the Allies in the Cold War. But only events will demonstrate exactly what his capacity of resistance will prove to be in case of an armed attack, and especially if the conflict remains localized.

It is hard to believe that the peoples of Yugoslavia will consider as defenders of their independence and dignity a regime which has brought upon them only misery, forced labor and confiscation of private property; which has deprived them of every liberty and has imposed the secret police as the supreme law of the country.

Constantin Fotitch, author of The War We Lost was the Yugoslav Ambassador to the United States from 1935 to 1944.

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